MARVEL

4

LGY#730

NORTH
RAMOS
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DELGADO

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four

RATED T

Alicia, sweet pea! Yer back--how wuz the *convention?*

Honestly? Really inspiring, Ben. I encountered ideas in kinetic sculpture that I'd never even *considered* before.

We have a surprise for you, Mother.

You *do,* Jo? Well, you know I love surprises. Lay it on me!

We got a *new dog,* Mom! *Surprise!*

...Really? Ben, we already have the cats *and* Princess. Do we...?

I know, I know, but-- I figgered we could find room in our hearts for *one more* li'l fuzzbucket, y'know?

And she won't just be your responsibility, Allie. Reed and myself and our kids are going to take care of her too.

Okay, Sue, so--what's her name? And where *is* she?

We called her "Jellybean," and you *have* to pet her, Mom. She's *so* soft.

Jellybean! *Come!*

...We're still working on her obedience training, but she *is* a quick study.

High praise from a genius, Reed.

Here she comes! *Good girl!*

An' trust me, 'Leesh...

...ya can't *help* but love her.

Brooklyn

ALICIA MASTERS-GRIMM IN: "BASIC OBEDIENCE"

JOHNNY STORM
HUMAN TORCH

BEN GRIMM
THE THING

SUSAN RICHARDS
INVISIBLE WOMAN

REED RICHARDS
MISTER FANTASTIC

Fantastic Four

A brilliant scientist--his best friend--the woman he loves--and her hot-headed younger brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space and were transformed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human! Now they are the Fantastic Four...and the world will never be the same again!

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FANTASTIC FOUR CREATED BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY

Jellybean, girl, how are you?

I'm *Alicia*, and I--

Sorry, did she *roll* in something? She's *sticky*. And--wet?

I don't--

Oh no, never mind. I'm sorry. I don't know *what* I felt.

Oh my gosh, Jellybean.

You're *adorable*, and I love you already.

I'm working on a new piece, hours later, when it starts to bother me.

I remember how ***unusual*** Jellybean felt when I first met her.

And then she didn't.

And it doesn't make ***sense.***

Ben? You around?

Comin'!

What's up, sweet pea?

It's Jellybean. I don't--it's like I've got two ***completely different*** ideas of who she is, or--

...I don't know how else to put it. She felt ***strange.***

I dunno, 'Leesh--I got her here in my arms, and I gotta say everythin' feels ***hunky-dory*** ta me.

You wanna pet her ta see?

I'm a sculptor and a blind woman.

So much of my life revolves around *touch, shape* and *texture.*

And I know--I *know*--that when I first touch that animal...

...I feel something *wrong.*

And then it's gone.

I've always used my sense of touch to *visualize,* to explore both what things *could be* and what they really are.

Everyone else relies on vision--but I don't *have* to see the world like they do.

I realize that when I try to *visualize* this pup--when I picture her in my head--I absolutely see Jellybean the dog.

She's small, furry, warm and snuggly.

She's adorable.

But when I stop visualizing and focus--really *focus*--on what I'm *sensing*...

...it's like waking up from a dream.

This is not a dog.

This is something very wrong that is making everyone *think* it's a dog.

And nobody else can sense it but me.

The first chance I have, I go to the smartest man I know.

Knock knock. Reed, you here?

I'm here, Alicia. Please come in.

Got a hypothetical for you, Big Brain.

Terrific. It'd be a welcome break from what I'm working on here.

Which is?

Oh, there's this distant world that ***looked*** like it had life signals, and now it doesn't.

It's much more likely to be an error in my data or sensors than anything ***sinister***--but I haven't ***found*** said error yet.

So! What's on your mind, Alicia?

Hypothetically, if there were a creature that ***looked*** scary, like ***really*** scary, but it wanted everyone to see it as something ***friendly*** and nonthreatening...

...how would it ***do*** that?

If you ask most people for the ***impossible,*** they'll tell you it can't be done.

Holography can--

Nothing physical, nothing with light.

Mentally, I guess.

They hit the reasonable limits of reason itself, and so they ***stop.***

But not Reed.

Hrm.

He'll assume it *can* be done, he'll figure out what a universe where it *could* happen *looks* like...

...and then he'll see if he can make *our* universe look like that too.

...Pareidolia.

If you could somehow hijack *pareidolia*...I think you could probably pull that off.

Remind me?

Of course. Here. Feel how I'm molding the flesh on my hand.

It's a smiley face.

Yes, but also *no.* It's actually two dots and a line that your brain *perceives* as a smiling face.

The *ventral surface* of the brain's temporal lobe, here--on the lateral side of the *fusiform gyrus*: It's what we use to recognize faces, and it's what you used just now.

But it misfires sometimes...

...and that gives you a *false positive.*

And by "misfires sometimes," I actually mean "misfires *routinely.*"

We see faces in *power outlets,* in *car headlights* and in darkened areas of the moon, or *Mars,* or in pieces of *toast*--it's part of what makes us human. We see faces *everywhere*.

That's *pareidolia:* a meaningful interpretation of meaningless data.

And it's remarkably powerful, especially since we can't turn it *off*. My face is well within human standards--but even when I distort it far beyond them...

...I *still* see a face. Everyone does.

And if something could *control* our pareidolia--turn up the volume on it...

...well, your *senses* would record one thing, but your brain would automatically transform it into *another*.

You'd look at something bad...

...and all you'd see is something good.

Of course, I'm using a rhetorical "you" here, Alicia. In fact--in this scenario, you'd actually have an ***advantage*** over most people.

You don't rely on vision like we do, so you don't ***see*** faces unless you ***imagine*** them.

I suppose any creature that controlled pareidolia would have more trouble with you, so long as you focused on what you ***felt*** instead of what you envisioned.

One could induce sighted people into having ***vision*** override all other senses, but you'd be less vulnerable to it.

...*Huh*. It's a fascinating thought experiment.

Why do you ask?

...*Uh*, no reason. Just the stray fancy of the artist's imagination. You know how it is.

I don't, but I find it intriguing to consider! Sue's here with Jellybean, by the way.

Hey, Allie.

Hey, Sue. I gotta go. ...Thanks for humoring me, Reed.

Anytime. Thank ***you*** for the fun hypothetical.

I know what you're doing, One-Called-Alicia.

Ben! Ben!!!

SCHLLLLLT

It won't work. Everything you're doing feels normal to him.

And it will *continue* to feel normal for as long as I wish it to.

He will not awaken.

No one will.

No! Leave me *alone!*

SMAK!

You don't perceive me as you should, One-Called-Alicia.

SCHLLLLLLT

But that's fine.

You require more attention from us. More *control.*

No! *NO!*

You will get it.

SCHLLLLLT

SCHLLLLLT

Rest. Listen.

Don't! *Don't--*

Obey.

SCHLLLLLLT

SCHLLLLLLT

SCHLLLLT

Reed's Research Log, supplemental. It's late: well past the time when biology demands I spend time *unconscious* and *intermittently hallucinating.*

But sleep can wait. Alicia's "hypothetical" has stayed with me.

"A creature," she said.

What would cause her thoughts to move along *those* lines? None of the presentations at her conference suggest anything close to it.

In fact, the only new stimulus I can find is our dog: *Jellybean.*

Suppose I couldn't trust my senses--or rather, couldn't trust my brain's *interpretation* of my senses.

It's a *wild* hypothesis, of course, but those have always been my favourite. Hence this invention:

A *pareidolia inhibitor.* If it works, it should temporarily suppress *all* forms of apophenia.

I intend to see what the world looks like without it.

The time is 2:07 a.m. My device is at maximum intensity.

Begin experiment one.

Fascinating. Data point alpha: This experimental image of clouds, in which I previously saw the shape of an instance of *Panthera leo* in profile...

...now, to me, seems merely a fully random accumulation of ***water vapor.***

It is a...***remarkably*** unsettling experience.

I believe I experience the universe less ***emotionally*** than most, but still, the world around me suddenly feels--***empty.*** Lifeless.

There are no faces: only shapes without ***meaning,*** without ***feeling.***

I see what I know to be my own visage...

...and it means as much to me as would a screenful of ***static.***

LATER.

Mornin', sleepyhead.

Please tell me you didn't stay up all night, honey.

I will if you want me to, darling, but it *would* be mendacious.

What does "mendacious" mean?

It means yer Uncle Reed stayed up all night working on his latest *gizmo.*

Johnny! No feeding the dogs at the table!

OM NOM NOM

Aw, but he's *hungry!*

Every animal in this house has *perfectly good* food in their dish.

Including *you,* Johnny.

What can I say, Sis? I'm a hero to all cats and dogs!

An announcement: I've discovered a field level that *reduces* pareidolia...

...while still allowing us to *recognize* ourselves. And I believe I've given it a wider field of effect.

KLIK

As such, there's a small experiment I'd like to run, but don't worry: It won't hurt--

SCHLLLLLLT

SCHLLLLT

SCHLLLLLT

--a bit.

BAXTER

POPS

MILK

What th--?! What happened ta *Jellybean*?!

Everyone, *back*!!

Whatever you have done, One-Called-Reed...

SCHLLLLLLT

SCHLLLLLLT

...I will now undo-- *permanently*!

You leave her alone, ya *beast!*

SMACK!

NO.

You will fall, and you will *die*, and you will *feed* us, and you will--

FWOOOSH!

SCREEEEEEE!

Hey, I saw this movie before.

I thought I'd downloaded someone's Ben Grimm biopic. *Boy,* was I wrong.

SCHLLLLLLT

SMASH!

SCHLLLLLLT

Reed, last night--it spoke in the plural! I think there's more than one!

If that's true, then...

...I need to **boost** transmission range! If I hook into the **power grid**, I should be able to reach the entire planet!

No! You must not--⇢⇢

You want **him,** ugly? Ya gotta go through **me.**

ZRRRRRRAKKKKKK!

MASSACHUSETTS.

What the **hell**?! Where did **those** come from?!

What'd you do to *Tony Bark*?!

ENGLAND.

Oi! **Nobody move!!**

SPAIN.

...Lunakins?

Th'rak to all units: return to the mothership immediately!

Abort, abort, abort!

SHLLLLT

BAXTER

SVRRRMMMM

It's gone!

Sue, I need to see orbit-- now!

On it! Turning water vapor invisible, neutralizing the sunlight around us...

...and done.

Yes-- there's a ship in geostationary! Great Scott!

It must've been here this whole time--visible in orbital imagery, but shielded from our minds the same way Jellybean was!

Detecting planetary defenses locking on.

Get us out of here now!

KRAKOOOM!

So, *uh*--sorry, what ***happened*** here? Who'd we just beat?

I have a theory: I believe these creatures travel the cosmos, forcing others to ***perceive*** them as harmless--

--or as Franklin would say, "***friend-shaped.***"

"Once they reach a critical mass on a given world, they induce its inhabitants to sleepwalk into their--possibly ***literal***--meat grinders.

"I suspect this is what happened to the world I was observing, and it was what was ***going*** to happen ***here,*** to ours."

Sorry-- Jellybean wanted to ***eat*** us?

It makes sense: ***soldiers*** risk being killed a lot more than abattoir workers do.

And it's ***cheaper*** than war. ***Safer,*** too.

You just arrive somewhere, relax and later ***harvest.***

I'll send instructions to other worlds on how to detect these creatures.

Alicia, your initial question was what made this possible. I've lost track of the number of times the ***Fantastic Four*** have saved Earth...

...but said number ***has*** gone up by one today.

Oh, but I'm not a member of the--

C'mon, 'Leesh. It'z a ***metaphorical*** four.

You just teamed up with Mr. Fantastic to save the world. I'm not sure what qualifications are higher than ***that.***

WELCOME

Do I get a uniform?

I mean, if you ***want*** one, I'm sure--

Actually, I will take a ***flying bathtub.***

Fantastic Four Fan Page

Hello Team!

FANTASTIC FOUR #1 was incredible! I like seeing Sue lead the team again. I remember when she took the lead in prior stories. Any chance we can get her '90s window costume back? It's my favorite!

I know that with the new movie out, stories will likely focus on the core four, but I am missing some prior team members. Any chance of seeing some of them in upcoming stories? I especially miss Sharon, Crystal and Scott. Lyja too.

Looking forward to the next issue.

Best regards,
Dan Elliott

Truly, Dan, there is no accounting for taste! I think this is perhaps the first request I've ever received to bring Sue's window costume back. And yet...we've got something coming up in just a few issues that may scratch that itch for you. Keep reading!

I'd like to begin by saying huge respect to Humberto for making the characters so expressive and vibrant without making them "cartoony." I got into comic books semi-recently, and one of the goals I had when I began was to get into the Fantastic Four's stories, as they'd always interested me. First, I read Jonathan Hickman's run (which I loved and have the highest of praise for), and then I figured I should get into their current series, which looked interesting from the great Alex Ross covers that I'd seen. The 2022-2025 run made me fall in love with the whole family, and I can safely say issue #7 is one of my favorite comic book issues of all time. It was so fun yet thought-provoking and a great study on Doctor Doom's character. Glad to see North's writing still going strong in the new issue #1, and I'm hoping to see more great things from this team. Is the Johnny Storm mustache here to stay for good, as it is still present in this new run?

Cesar DeSantos
Wisconsin

Never count a good mustache out, Cesar! And in fact, Humberto's been drawing it larger and crazier than ever!

Hi FF Team!

FANTASTIC FOUR #1 was such a treat to read! I've been keeping up with FANTASTIC FOUR during the last run, and it's definitely my favorite iteration as of yet! I'd love to see more Fantastic Four side characters like Wyatt Wingfoot, the Future Foundation or the Inhumans. It's been great to see Alicia become such a part of the team! I love her a lot! I'm just a huge fan of the F4 side characters, so I'm always hoping to see more included! Anyway, excited for what's to come!

Adelaide Hodnett
Texas

And we've got some good news for you as well, Adelaide! You'll be seeing at least two of your three requests over the course of the next half year or so, if all goes according to plan.

I recently fell in love with the Fantastic Four and promised myself that when a new issue #1 of FANTASTIC FOUR released, I would jump right into it. And let me just say, so far, I love this new run. Not only is it written by the person who wrote one of my favorite FF runs, but it's a genuinely fun story! For me, it checks all the boxes: time travel, suspense, heart, incredible art and, of course, dinosaurs. And although I'm jumping in mid-story (and there's a lot I've missed!), it really doesn't feel like it. Issue #1 feels like a brand-new story, and I'm here for it. Fantastic job to everyone who's worked on it, and thank you as well.

Scotty Manookin
Utah

Glad the issue did its job for you, Scotty! Of course, whenever we relaunch a series with a new issue #1, the idea is to make it as accessible to a new reader as possible. So happy to hear that we succeeded!

I've been a longtime FF fan, ever since I was a little kid. I don't always get to keep up with them as much as I'd like. Luckily for me, the week I decided to jump back in was release week for issue #1 of this new volume! Plus, with the FIRST STEPS tie-in book, this has been an exciting week for FF comics!

First, let me say that I LOVED the new issue. Very easy to follow for someone who hadn't read in a few years. It was interesting seeing Johnny with a mustache, but I am absolutely HERE for it! Good to see Doc Doom is still sending the FF hurtling through time just like he was back in the early '60s in his first appearance. Everything is the same familiarity and still fresh and fun! Ben Grimm has always been my favorite comic book character. As someone who struggles with body image and can often feel like I look like a "monster," despite everyone around me's love for me, what Aunt Petunia's favorite nephew goes through always resonates with me very hard. Anyway, good job on the new issue, love the writing, love the art, and I'm excited to keep reading on and see what the FF are up to now! It's gonna be great!

Autumn Cee
Knoxville, TN

Rock on, Autumn! Glad to have you back in the fold!

Next time: It's a locked-room mystery facing Sue, who needs to prove that the Black Cat didn't perpetrate a heist. Which is kind of like arguing that water isn't wet. See you there!

Tom B
8/28/25

As always, if you've got an opinion to share, you can email it to us at MHEROES@MARVEL.COM. Be sure to mark your letters as "Okay to Print!" if you'd like to see them featured here on the Fan Page!

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BILL FINGER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN COMIC BOOK WRITING

DON GLUT

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Next

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